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Housekeepers' Chat

Thursday, March 6, 1930.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "A New Tune for Wash Day." Information from Bureau of Home Economics,
U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Methods and Equipment for Home Laundering."

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My Next-Door Neighbor was singing, as she hung out the clothes. Her tune was most original; the words were slightly out of keeping with the season:

"There's something very beautiful,
And something very gay,
About a line of snow-white sheets
Strung on a line in May."

"Anything wrong with that song?" she asked.

"Not a thing, except that this is March, not May."

"Poetic license," explained my neighbor. "If you prefer, I'll compose another verse, and rhyme March with starch. 'Clothes Line Lyrics' made to order. Help me hang this sheet, will you please, Aunt Sammy? They look so much nicer, hung straight on the line."

I helped my friend hang out the clothes, while she told me about her new washing machine.

"It's a gem," she said. "I've used many a washing machine in my time, but this is the best one yet. Last night I read all the directions for taking care of a washing machine, and I am following them, word for word. Want to see my washing machine? Then come into the basement, Maud, and see my birthday gift from Jim. With his best wishes, and he hopes it will improve my disposition. Well, it already has -- I used to get so provoked at our old rattle-trap of a washing-machine -- no wonder I was cranky!"

I admired the new birthday gift, and I watched it work. Then I became so enthusiastic about washing machines that I went home and wrote an essay on "The Care of the Washing Machine." Will you listen, if I'll read it?

I won't begin by saying that washing machines save time, and labor, and dispositions, and clothes, because everybody knows that. But I wonder if everybody knows how to take care of a washing machine, to make it last a long time, and do the best work. In the first place, how many of us read the little book that comes with the machine? It states the correct amount of clothes to be washed, without overloading the machine. Overloading is hard on the clothes, and hard on the washer. The water line is marked on most machines. Too much water causes excessive splashing, and in many cases cuts down the efficiency of the washer.

After using the machine, rinse it thoroughly with hot water, operate it for a short time, drain, and dry. Always leave the drain faucet open, and prop the lid up an inch or two, to allow free circulation of the air. Remove the cylinders, and dry them thoroughly. You can prevent much discoloration of the metal tubs, by drying them carefully.

If you have an electric machine, pull out the electric ^{plug} when you're through washing, and coil the connecting cord where it will not collect moisture or dirt. Never oil or adjust any part of the washer while the cord is connected to the current source.

The other day a radio friend wrote for information about choosing a washing machine. Since that is too long a subject to discuss by radio, I am sending this listener a copy of a bulletin published by the Bureau of Home Economics. The bulletin is called "Methods and Equipment for Home Laundrying." It gives excellent suggestions for equipping a home laundry, and doing a family washing and ironing. It tells how to wash curtains, and sweaters, and pillows, too.

The next question is one which may interest all of you. "Dear Aunt Sammy: I wish you would tell me whether it is always necessary to boil clothes, and please tell me the correct way to rinse them."

Clothes may be boiled, if you want to disinfect them thoroughly, but boiling is not necessary. Under good conditions of washing, and rinsing, and drying, the boiling process may be omitted. Let's not add any unnecessary work, on wash day. If you do boil your clothes, wring them from the wash water, place them in fresh, hot, soapy water, and boil for five or ten minutes. If you boil them longer, they may turn yellow. When you lift the clothes from the boiler, let them drain as much as possible.

If the clothes are very dirty, or very yellow, you may want to bleach them, while they boil. Some persons use kerosene or turpentine, in the proportion of one to six tablespoons, to a boilerful of water. I don't like to use kerosene or turpentine, however, because it is so difficult to remove the odor, especially if you use hard water. Both kerosene and turpentine are inflammable, and turpentine is hard on the hands. An easier, but more expensive method, of whitening clothes is to add the juice of one or two lemons, to a boilerful of water.

Now about the rinsing. Clothes should be rinsed in plenty of hot, clear, soft water. Cold water hardens the soap, and makes it hard to remove. Never put bluing in the first rinse water. All soap and washing powders should be removed from the clothes, before they are put into the bluing water. It is important that clothes be well rinsed, because soap and washing powders will weaken and yellow them, if allowed to remain on them indefinitely.

The rest of the questions are not about washing, but they might as well be answered today.

Here's one, about cleaning walls. "Can you tell me," asks a homemaker, "how to clean ordinary plastered and papered walls and ceilings?"

Ordinary plastered and papered walls and ceilings should be cleaned with a soft wall brush, or a broom covered with soft cloth, such as cotton flannel. Use light overlapping strokes in cleaning; heavy strokes rub the dirt in. Cotton batting is good for cleaning places that soil more quickly than the rest, for example, the wall over radiators, registers, and stoves. Rub the wall lightly with the cotton; turn it as it becomes soiled.

Here's another question -- no, this isn't a question, but a nice letter, from a friend who does interior decorating.

"I was interested in your talk about the living room," she writes, "and how to make it homelike. Will you allow me to say a few words about lamps? One central source of illumination, as the one ceiling light, can quickly ruin the effect of a thoughtfully furnished room. But the use of several lamps, that concentrate the light where it is needed, will enhance the homey atmosphere. Distribute your lamps so that there will be a fairly even light throughout the room. This affords an opportunity for soft coloring, and gives a feeling of intimacy and hospitality.

"Remember that lamps should suggest their purpose, be well designed, and beautiful in structure. The shade is a part of the lamp, and must seem to belong with it. In selecting lamp shades, remember that they are not separate objects."

And that's all of that letter. Very good advice, and we'll try to remember it. By the way, I'm going to discuss the dining room, next Tuesday, "The Dining Room of a Homelike House."

Tomorrow we'll have another menu, and a recipe for Curried Chicken with Carrots.

Friday: "A Guide to Good Meals for the Young Homemaker."

